be paid will be a very small amount. If the assessee is a large Jenmi and his total income is large, then the rate of tax on his total income might be higher than 10 *cash* per rupee, but such a Jenmi ought not to grudge to contribute his due quota to the revenues of the State. The principle is that jenmom *thanathu* land is exempt from land-tax alone and not from any other taxes or cesses.

(2) Forest.

17. Forest Administration.

Mr. R. Narayana Pillai (Member, Vilavankod Taluk) in speaking on the subject of forest administration in general, dwelt at length on the following points :—

Reserved forests.—The Member observed that the area of reserved forests in the State at the end of 1096 stood at 2,387 square miles, while there were only 1,433 square miles of reserved forests in 1068 and 2,245 square miles in 1081. Side by side with increased reservation, lands within reserves were also being assigned to outsiders for tea cultivation in preference to the claims of the natives of the soil. The wholesome rule which prevailed till a few years ago requiring all foreigners, European or American, to get the permission of Government to acquire property in the State was abrogated, and a good portion of the lands included in reserves was registered away in the names of foreigners in spite of the protests of the Conservator of Forests and, in consequence, additional lands were included under reserves to make up for such registries. In the interests of the growing population of the State it was imperatively necessary to check the tendency for increased reservation and the assignment of lands to outsiders.

Grazing grounds.—Cattle and grazing grounds were important from the stand-point of agriculture and their importance had been recognised and even emphasised by Government in their Proceedings No. 3142/S. R., dated the 1st July, 1907. Nevertheless, much land fit for grazing had subsequently been brought under registry, while lands ostensibly set apart and preserved as grazing grounds for cattle were quite useless for the purpose, either because they were situated at long distances from the villages intended to be served or were mostly rocky or devoid of any tree-growth or even grass. In these circumstances, the Member apprehended that the situation would become very grave when the few available cattle *porambokes* in the various Divisions were also brought under registry in pursuance of the recent orders of the Government conveyed in their Review of the Administration Report of the Forest Department for 1096.

Firewood.—The Member then referred to the abolition of the Government Fuel Depôts at Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Thuckalai and Darsanamcope, and stated that their abolition was a retrograde measure, inasmuch as during the period of their existence they had served to regulate the market price of fuel and bring the thing within the easy reach of all. Now that those depôts had been abolished and firewood was getting scarce in the country, green leaf manure trees were being largely cut down for fuel and this was bound eventually to tell on agriculture. The only other alternative was to procure fuel from private registered holdings under cover of free passes issued by the Forest Department. But that course was also beset with difficulties. With a view to overcome all those difficulties, the Member suggested that sales of fuel from Government depôts might be revived and continued as before. He also suggested that the Free Pass Rules might be modified, limiting the need for passes to fuel from private holdings lying contiguous to or adjoining reserved forests which had necessarily to pass through watch stations on the route and dispensing with passes for the transport of fuel from private holdings within the plains.

Free pass for timber, etc.—In regard to this, the Member said that no facilities had been afforded in the matter of obtaining free passes for private timber in spite of repeated representations at previous sessions of the Assembly and that

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the matter was one of pressing importance calling for the serious consideration of Government. Under the Rules regulating the grant of free passes issued as annexure to G. O. No. 2490/F. & M. R., dated the 19th June 1915, applications for free passes should be made to the Forest Ranger and they should be accompanied by the Proverthikar's certificate of registry and a clear sketch of the land from which the timber was to be removed. On receipt of the application, the Ranger had to proceed to the locality, identify the land with reference to the surveyed and demarcated boundaries on the spot, and then make his recommendation to the Divisional Forest Officer for the grant of a pass, if he was satisfied that the timber had been felled from the private holding in question. This procedure, the Member said, was cumbrous and entailed considerable delay. Ordinarily, no free pass could be obtained, unless the applicant knocked at four different offices, the Proverthi and Taluk Cutcheries, and the Forest Range and Divisional Offices. The applicant had also to incur expenses, firstly, in the shape of presents to the Revenue and Forest subordinates with a view to expedite the disposal of his application, and, secondly, for keeping clean the surveyed boundaries of the estates, which item of expenditure was bound to be heavy when the estates happened to be situated in the midst of forests. The Member conceded that the formalities prescribed by the Rules were very necessary to prevent illicit removal of timber from Government forests, but observed that that purpose could be well served by limiting the appplication of the Rules to passes for timber from estates lying contiguous to or in the vicinity of Government Forests. At any rate, there was no necessity for extending their application to estates far from any Government Forest or Reserve without any possibility of smuggling. In short, the Member complained that the Rules were misunderstood and worked in a manner materially interfering with the free and unrestricted rights of ownership, causing great hardship to the people and leading to the inference that the Department was bent on discouraging applications for free passes. By way of example, the Member stated that the production of the Proverthicar's certificate of registry and the sketch of the land was being insisted upon not only in connection with the first application for a pass for the removal of timber from an estate, but also in connection with all subsequent applications in reference to the same estate and applications for extension of time to time-expired passes. In the circumstances detailed above, the Member requested that the Rules might be suitably modified so as to facilitate the purchase of timber from private estates, especially in view of the fact that the purchase of timber from Government depôts was equally, if not more, difficult.

Tariff rates for timber.—The Member then adverted to the general revision of the tariff rates for timber in Tulam 1096 and observed that the enhanced rates then fixed had the effect of placing forest timber beyond the reach of men of ordinary means. It was, however, subsequently notified that timber for *bona fide* local consumption would be sold from the depôts as a concessional measure, at 75 per cent of the current tariff rates. The Member observed that this concession was but a nominal one as, in practice, it was found that no timber could be had from the depôts even at full tariff rates. The reason was not far to seek. The stock arriving at a depôt was not available for sale before check-measurement by the Divisional Forest Officer. Such check-measurements usually took place just in time for the periodical auction sales at the depôt. Soon after check-measurement, small sales of timber for *bona fide* domestic consumption were sometimes effected, but such retail purchasers invariably found that, while they had to pay full tariff value or 75 per cent of that value, timbers of the same quality were being knocked down by outsiders at 60 or even 50 per cent of the tariff rates in the auctions that immediately followed the purchase made by them. The Member, therefore, prayed that timber for *bona fide* local consumption should be sold to the public at a concession rate fixed strictly with reference to the average rates realised at the departmental auction sales.

Royal trees.—Speaking on the subject of royal trees, the Member referred in the first place to the scarcity of teak trees in the forests of the State and the

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avowed policy of Government to protect teak and limit its extraction within reasonable limits. All the same, the Member said that there had been an increased outturn under royal trees year after year and this circumstance was being explained away as being the result of increased exploitation from *puduval* lands and registered holdings. The Member added that such exploitation could only have the effect of making timber more scarce than ever.

The Member next observed that the law, as it stood, empowered Forest Officers to freely enter the precincts of private holdings, and to fell down and remove the royal trees found growing thereon without the knowledge or consent of the estate owner. That was a source of great hardship, for without information regarding the trees so felled, their cubical contents, the depôts to which they were removed and the prices at which they were sold, owners of private lands could not possibly formulate their claims to the *kudivila* due and would be forced to accept what the departmental officers chose to give. The Member, therefore, prayed that the law might be suitably modified and that in particular it might be ruled that no Forest Officer should enter the premises of registered holdings without previous notice in writing duly given to the owners thereof and that no tree should be felled or marked for felling except in the presence of such owners or their agents.

Elephants.—Elephants formed an important source of Forest Revenue. While the number captured every year declined, the number that died every year showed an increase. The decline was attributed to the paucity of decoy elephants in the Forest Department and to the absence of an expert especially skilled in the capture, training and treatment of elephants in the Department. The Member suggested that such among the elephants in the Revenue Department as were fit for being employed as decoys might be transferred to the Forest Department. He also emphasised the need for reviving the post of the special Veterinary Officer in the Forest Department, abolished recently.

Working plans.—Lastly, the Member alluded to the repeated instructions issued by Government on the subject of Working Plans and observed with regret that, in spite of the necessary trained staff, the matter was not receiving adequate attention.

Dewan's reply.—You have dealt with many important points in your discussion, such as the question of free passes, the question of royal trees, etc. I cannot make an off-hand pronouncement with reference to these. The question of royal trees has already engaged my attention, and I have not yet had time to thoroughly examine it. All that I can say now is that both these questions will engage my attention at an early date. I am not aware of any case in which Government have sanctioned the assignment of lands within a reserved forest to a non-Travancorean against the recommendation of the Conservator of Forests.

You have referred to the question of reserving lands for fuel. That is a very large subject. Your reference to the G. O. on this question, in the way you have done, is not quite fair. I happen to have here extracts from that order. What is said there is that in the course of investigation it has been brought to the notice of Government that, besides fuel and fodder reserves, there is in each Revenue Division a large extent of land which has been unnecessarily reserved against registry. I have myself seen more than one case of land reserved in the Government accounts for pasturage which has been encroached upon and cultivated. Instructions have been accordingly issued to scrutinise *porambokes* and report, after personal inspection by Peishkars or by their Assistants, as to which of them should be reserved for grazing and which may be thrown open for cultivation. This is very different from what you say. You also say that the abolition of fuel depôts was made in blind imitation of the practice in British India. I am sorry that by so saying you are showing scant courtesy to Government. This was not the only reason for the abolition of these depôts.

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Mr. K. P. Raman Pillai B. A., B. L. (Member, Quilon Taluk) began by thanking the Dewan for the permission accorded to the Members to make their representations from the *dais* facing their fellow-members and the Dewan. He then raised a point of order as to whether subsequent speakers had the right to criticise the views expressed by previous speakers, to which the Dewan replied that he was not able to see any objection to it under the existing rules.

Coming to his representation, the Member first drew the attention of Government to the difficulties he had experienced in getting copies of the Departmental Administration Reports and suggested that such reports might be made available to the Members a fortnight before the Assembly. He then dealt with the administration of the Forest Department under the following heads and attempted to show that, during the three years covered by the administration of Mr. Raman Menon, nothing had been done scientifically, economically or financially to improve the working of the department. He himself was not an expert, though he had been for some time at Dehra Dhun, but would proceed to make his observations with such knowledge as he possessed.

Working Plans.—The preparation of working plans was the first step towards forest conservancy. While its importance was recognised and acted upon by the earlier Conservators, Messrs. Bourdillon and Rama Rao, Mr. Subrahmanya Aiyar, the late Conservator, considered them unnecessary and sought to replace them by what were known as simple working schemes. As a result of the first Conference held at Quilon in February 1917, the late Conservator of Forests reported that the preparation of plans on an elaborate and detailed scale was not necessary in view of the incomplete and unreliable nature of the data available and that the preparation of simple preliminary working schemes by the Divisional Forest Officers was sufficient to meet immediate requirements. This was approved by the Government. In the opinion of the Member, Mr. Subrahmanya Aiyar was an officer who knew only the theory of forestry, and he had no practical experience of the working of the Department. In the G. O. sanctioning the new scheme, Government had called for a set of draft Rules from the Conservator for the preparation of such simple working schemes; but the Rules had not yet been submitted to Government. Though in pursuance of the G. O. a number of such working schemes had been submitted by the Divisional Forest Officers and were pending when the present Conservator took charge, they had not received any attention from him during the three years of his tenure of office. Year after year, the Government in their reviews had been insisting on steady progress being made in the preparation of those simple working schemes, but without avail. Only two simple working schemes had been submitted to Government and sanctioned by them so far, all the others being reported to be pending inspection by the Conservator. In regard to the sanctioned regular working plans for the Shendurni forests, it had been laid down in a G. O. of 1917 that a Committee consisting of the late Conservator, the late Deputy Conservator Mr. Venugopala Aiyar who prepared the plans, and the local Divisional Officer should jointly go over the area covered by each of the plans and submit their notes of inspection and recommendations for any revision that might be necessary in their working during the next five years. The joint report was submitted to Government by the late Conservator and was referred to the present Conservator in 1919. The final report had not yet been submitted. Again, the importance of sticking to the working plans once sanctioned had been lost sight of and material changes had been allowed to be made in them without the sanction of Government. The Member also commented on the failure of the Conservator to supply any information in his report for 1096 in regard to the exploitation of timber from areas under regular and provisional working plans. Though the system of coupe sales introduced by Mr. Subrahmanya Aiyar had been discontinued, the changes introduced by the present Conservator disastrously affected forest conservancy. He instanced the scheme for the working of teak and blackwood trees in the Ettumanur Range and stated that such an unscientific and unsystematic method, involving simultaneous and indiscriminate cutting down of both young and grown-up trees, tended to the destruction of the forest wealth of the country, eventually leading to the utter denudation of all forest growth.

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Communications and buildings.—The importance of communications and buildings in the interests of forest conservancy and administration could not be over-rated. Special emphasis was laid on this matter in Mr. Rama Rao's report for 1087 and in the Government review thereon. The Member quoted extracts from reports and reviews and observed that in this direction also practically nothing had been done during the last 3 years. The late Conservator had suggested the desirability of having the question investigated by a Forest Engineer, but the present Conservator did nothing in furtherance of that suggestion. According to the report for 1095, only a sum of Rs. 769 had been spent on original works. In his report for 1096, the Conservator of Forests brought to the notice of Government the large amount of work remaining to be done by way of opening up the State forests by good communications and for the first time complained of insufficient allotment, to which the Government rightly replied in their review of that report by remarking that it was a point that should have been pressed in his budget and that they would be prepared to help him with more funds for the purpose, if he could satisfy them that he had estimates ready. For want of proper communications no intensive inspection of reserves was possible and as a matter of fact Government themselves had pointed out that such inspection was not being properly done by the officers concerned. The Member pointed out that the want of buildings affected the inspection of the interior areas of reserved forests and that for want of transport facilities the cost of extraction had risen considerably, while the disposal of timber had gone down.

Forest Settlement.—Coming next to forest settlement and demarcation, the Member said that in that matter also the present Conservator had done nothing appreciable. He then referred to the contracts undertaken by the department, particularly the sub-contracts for sleeper supply under Mr. Chotani, and contended that, if the contract had been directly taken from the Railway Company, the Government would have gained over a lakh of Rupees which now went to Mr. Chotani's Firm as the middleman's share. From the standpoint of revenue also, the administration of the department by the present Conservator was a failure, the net revenue having gone down from 10 lakhs in 1094 to 3 lakhs in 1096, and the reasons stated for the poor results were not sound. The Member deplored that the department had not even the commercial instinct of an ordinary merchant in that, instead of limiting the extraction of timber to the demand in the present dull condition of the market, more than the average quantity of timber sold annually was extracted by it. He next adverted to the Conservator's methods of hearing appeals, disposal of patronage and award of punishments and said that they were very unsatisfactory. He concluded with the observation that, though, as admitted by the Government themselves, there was nothing striking by way of results achieved during the year, it was a matter of surprise that they complimented him by saying that the year's work was sound and substantial. Government must have had their own motive to do so.

Dewan's reply.—I am sorry that I have to ask you to cut short your speech, because you have already taken more than the usual time.

Member—I have to make a few suggestions.

Dewan.— If you hand them over to me, I shall look into them. I should congratulate you on the great fund of humour you seem to possess and on your great skill at dissection. You refer to your failure to obtain the report for 1096 and the difficulties you were consequently put to. Had you brought the matter to my notice, I should have done everything in my power to supply you with the papers. In future, if you feel any such difficulty, you may write to me. You seem to have a detailed knowledge of the working of the Forest Department. You say you had been for some time in Dehra Dun, although you hesitate to class yourself among forest experts. I too am not an expert. I must equally admit that Government is not an expert, and I have necessarily to take into consideration and give weight to the recommendations of the responsible head of the Forest Department. You have referred to working plans and quoted some authorities on the working plan system. All that I can say on that point is that there

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are differences of opinion in regard to the value of working plans. The several other matters referred to in your speech will receive due consideration. Most of your observations were directed against Mr. Raman Menon's administration of the Department. You have also criticised the concluding sentence in the Government review on the Forest Administration Report for 1096. Mr. Raman Menon is now going away, and I must say, in fairness to him, that a verdict cannot be passed on his work without looking into all aspects of it, nor do I think it fair on your part to say that, in making the remarks contained in the last sentence of their review of the work of the Department for 1096, Government had an ulterior motive.

18. The assignment of wet lands and Eata forests for paddy cultivation.

Mr. Kuriyan Unnittan (Member, Pattanamtitta Taluk) began by saying that nearly one-half of the State was being maintained as reserved forests, that there existed large areas of swamps and *Eata* forests within those forests which were well suited for paddy cultivation, and that his prayer was for the assignment of such lands to the ryots for wet cultivation. Though the same subject had been repeatedly pressed at several sessions of the Assembly in the past, no final orders had yet been passed in the matter. When there were good lands by the cultivation of which all the paddy required for consumption in the State could be produced here, it was regrettable to see the importation of large quantities of paddy from outside year after year. The Director of Agriculture himself had stated that it was owing to the reservation of good paddy lands that they were compelled to import foreign paddy and that not even 10 per cent of the area fit for cultivation had been actually brought under the plough. In the reserved forests at Koni, which comprised about 400 square miles, there were vast areas which could profitably be converted into wet lands. The Forest Department might object to the assignment of the lands on the ground that the land-holders would interfere with the trees and set fire to the forests. But this objection, the Member said, was not tenable since the forest officers ought to take the necessary precaution to prevent ryots from tampering with the trees in any way. He observed that about 2,000 acres of land in the Ranni Reserve had already been brought under rubber cultivation by European planters, that there were other registered holdings in the Kumaramperur Reserve and that no harm had resulted from the owners of those lands. The Member, therefore, suggested that rather than leave the *Eata* forests and swamps within the reserved forests to themselves, it would be advisable to have them leased to the ryots on certain prescribed conditions for the cultivation of paddy, in return for which they might be asked to plant up teak trees over the area. Such a step, he said, would be immediately beneficial to the ryots and lucrative to the Government in the long run. He also stated that there were, besides the said lands, *Poramboke* lands situated on the borders of reserves which might also be assigned, and he requested a personal inspection of such lands by the Dewan. The Member concluded by saying that, at the last session of the Assembly when Mr. Ittiavira Thomas (Member, Peermade Taluk) brought forward the same subject, Government had promised that the question would be looked into and a Committee appointed for seeing whether it was feasible to throw open more lands from the Ranni reserve for paddy cultivation. He was not aware at what stage the matter stood. But he prayed that the question might be finally disposed of only after getting a report from a Committee composed of the Conservator of Forests, the Director of Agriculture, the Dewan Peishkar of the Division and two non-official members appointed for the purpose.

Dewan's reply.—The question of the appointment of Committees for investigating the possibility of throwing open more cultivable lands from the reserved forests is under the consideration of Government. The disposal of this question has been delayed on account of the correspondence between the Government and the Conservator of Forests. A decision is expected to be soon reached.

I shall go to Ranni and see for myself some of the places referred to by you. The system you refer to of leasing lands within reserves for temporary cultivation

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